

FOUR YEARS IN
LIBERIA

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It is with sincere gratitude to our heavenly Father, who has been pleased to call me to the work I have been doing during the past quadrennium, and with the highest appreciation for the words of encouragement and the financial assistance of friends throughout the Church, that I come to our people with this my first quadrennial report. I do not flatter myself with the belief that I have done all that might have been done, nor that I have accomplished as much as someone better qualified for the work could have done, yet I do say sincerely and conscientiously I have done the very best I could in carrying forward the work committed to my hands. I have had special supervision of the Liberia Annual Conference, although I have visited the missions in the West Central Africa Mission Conference, going over them in company with Bishop Hartzell as carefully as it was possible to do in a visit of a few weeks. Liberia is the oldest foreign mission field in the Church, and is situated north of the equator, but sufficiently near so that its entire area is within the Torrid Zone and subject to the varied peculiarities and climatic disadvantages of all equatorial regions. I have spent as much time on the ground traveling throughout the bounds of the Conference as I thought was best for me and the most rapid development of the work. I have given close attention to the churches and missions already established and have opened a number of others at varying distances from the coast, the farthest being one hundred and fifty miles. Some of these new missions are so located that they constitute a chain interiorward and reach native people who have never before been provided with either teachers or preachers. A few of the stations are well equipped, while others are being conducted in buildings that are neither permanent nor substantial.

While with Bishop Hartzell in Angola we held the first

Bishops' Conference ever held in Africa by Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church. There we laid our plans for the quadrennium and for the Diamond Jubilee, which we hope to see profitably observed throughout the Church. We did not fully realize all we hoped to accomplish previous to the assembling of the General Conference, but there has, nevertheless, been enough achieved to indicate the glorious victories we hope and pray for in the near future.

In January, 1907, Bishop Burt visited the Liberia Annual Conference as the representative of the General Superintendents. Though necessarily brief, his visit made an excellent impression on the Conference and the people. He was accompanied by Bishop Hartzell, and all seemed much gratified to have present for the first time in the history of the work and of the republic three Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Burt lectured on "Italy," and both he and Bishop Hartzell preached on Sunday, to the delight of the splendid audiences that came out to hear them. The Bishops were invited out to several dinners and a reception given by our Methodist people, and also to the New Year's reception given by President and Mrs. Barclay. There is no doubt in my mind that the presence of these brethren impressed our membership as did nothing else during the quadrennium that the interest of the Church in the salvation of Africa is greater now than ever before.

HEALTH CONDITIONS OF THE FIELD

The prevailing opinion among those familiar with the sanitary conditions of the West Coast of Africa is that there is constant improvement. Civilization is constantly inaugurating changes which make the coast more habitable and healthful. Then, too, the diseases peculiar to that region are better understood by physicians, and, while they are not absolutely under their control, the indications are that ere long they will be entirely mastered. It cannot be said that those unacclimated do not have fever occasionally, nor that there is not now and then a death resulting therefrom, but neither of these is as frequent as in former years. Such conditions have been brought about by the commercial interest Europe has in Africa. Her purpose

is to blot out as near as possible everything and everybody that hinder the progress of commerce. Medical schools have been established in Europe which make special study of tropical diseases, and the additional knowledge thus acquired has proven extremely beneficial to all concerned.

Our workers in Liberia have suffered somewhat during the quadrennium from fever, and yet the universal testimony among them is that they suffer far less now than was the case a few years ago. Some have been compelled to come home for a change, which has, as a rule, proven beneficial, but, taken all in all, we have reasons to congratulate ourselves that so few have been compelled to leave the field.

Professor Thomas R. McWilliams, a graduate of the State University of Kansas, and a man possessing special gifts as a teacher of the sciences, was called to his reward in April, 1905. He was a teacher in the College of West Africa. Just previous to his death his wife returned to the States in poor health, and in a few months thereafter passed into the beyond to join her husband.

In September, 1907, the Rev. J. B. Robertson, a man seventy-one years of age, who went as a missionary to Africa in 1890, during Bishop Taylor's administration, was called home. He died at his post, and I feel confident that he never did a better year's work than during the last year of his life. He built a splendid mission house and a new church with very little expense to the Board. At the time of his death he and his excellent wife were in charge of the Binos Industrial Mission.

Miss Agnes McAllister went to the field nineteen years ago, and was desirous of rounding out twenty years of service for the salvation of Africa, but was not permitted to do so. Not feeling as strong as usual the latter part of the past year, she was granted a furlough. Just previous to the assembling of the Annual Conference she asked that her work be provided for that she might start home, and went directly to the Madeira Islands. Here she spent a few weeks and then went to Paris, hoping that by thus delaying her home-coming the warm season would have set in in the States by the time of her arrival. But the summons to her heavenly home came to her in Paris, and in her death the Church loses a faithful worker, and the native

African will never find a more devoted friend. She has done a great work in Africa.

THE PEOPLE'S READINESS FOR THE GOSPEL

As the result of my own observation, as well as that of others who have had exceptional opportunity to study conditions in Africa, I am confident that the native is more anxious for the gospel to-day than ever before. There are more applications by far for the establishment of schools and churches than I can possibly comply with. There has been such a positive and emphatic awakening along this line that we all feel the day of Africa's salvation has come. During the year just closed it was my privilege to travel hundreds of miles by canoe and on foot in the interior of the continent, and I passed through tribe after tribe that, as far as I could learn, had never seen a missionary. Everything tended to indicate that they were undoubtedly what are called raw heathen; yet the people of many of the towns begged me for teachers and preachers. I cannot begin to tell you how my heart went out to them. I assure you it is an exceedingly pathetic thing to stand in the midst of a great throng of ignorant, degraded human beings who beg for the bread of life as a child begs his parent for food, when you know you are unable to satisfy their hunger. But when they would see our mission boys who accompanied me and listen to them sing and pray they seemed to feel that Jesus could do for them what had been done for others, and O, how I would praise God to be able to put a competent teacher and worker in every one of these towns. I did begin work at a few places and am much gratified at the outcome. Whenever I would ask the people what they would do to start a mission among them, they almost invariably replied that they would help to build a house, and this they have done in five different places where the work has been taken up by native Christians. Such houses do not last more than two or three years, but they show the spirit of the people and furnish shelter for those who open up the work. I am praying that God may open the way for us to replace these buildings at an early day with small iron mission houses, such as we are compelled to use in the climate of that section. The time was, and that in the not very distant past, when the people required a

gift to permit the establishment of a mission in their towns. But I thank God that day has passed and, I hope, passed forever.

Some months ago I was in Cape Palmas, two hundred and fifty miles below Monrovia, and an old king who lived eighty miles away heard of my presence there. He got into his canoe and came all the way down the Cavally River to see me. Bright and early one morning he made his appearance and bowing before me, pleaded for a teacher for his people and for someone to show them "God-way." He had learned of what the mission was doing for one of the tribes below him, and he felt that his people could not keep up unless there was someone to give them the light. There was nothing to do but promise him that as soon as possible I would send him someone, and I feel that there are very few here to-day but that would have done the same. I promised him on faith as I have had to promise others, and I am glad to say that the worker sent there has made an excellent beginning. When I visited the place I held services in the combination church and dwelling they had erected and baptized those who had been brought into the kingdom.

While at Wissika Mission, sixty miles up the Cavally River, the chief men of the nearest native town, twelve in all, came to me and asked that I build a church in their home town for them. They were so insistent that the missionary urged me to do so if possible. I asked them what they would do to assist, and they replied that they would go in "the bush" and saw the heavy timbers for the building. At the Annual Conference our missionary reported that much of the material necessary had already been gotten out. What I am trying to do is to secure money enough to purchase the iron for the roofing, the doors, the windows, and ceiling. I feel that I must be ready by the time they are, and am confident that God will open the way for me to do so, as he has done in so many other cases. It would be easy to cite other instances in which the people are every bit as anxious to abandon heathenism, but I consider it unnecessary to do so at this time.

SELF-HELP AND SELF-SUPPORT

It is evident that you will be interested also to know the progress our membership is making along the line of self-help

and self-support. The fact that they have not been large contributors to the support of their own work is not, in my judgment, because they are opposed to doing so, but because, as it seems, it has not been required of them, and being for the most part a poor people and therefore not able to give largely, they had never realized what could be accomplished by the united effort of those of limited means. When Bishop Gilbert Haven, of blessed memory, visited this field in 1876, he wrote back to America that no collections were taken, and church-houses dropped down unless kept up by missionary help. He went to Clay Ashland, on the Saint Paul River, and wrote the "Christian Advocate" that there was only one church in the place and that was the Baptist. The Methodist was in ruins by rain and neglect. The Presbyterian and Episcopalian were gone, and he concluded that too much help did it.

These were the conditions then, but I believe the facts will justify me in saying that a remarkable change has come over Liberia in the last two years. The first year I was there I visited a community for a sojourn of a few days and was waited upon the first night I was there by a committee asking that I furnish the money to rebuild the church. I told them I could get some money to help them when they began work. But this statement did not discourage them, for they held on and they pressed their case until a late hour. They were greatly annoyed, were vexed with me, but thinking I was right I stood my ground. Several months passed before I was there again. This time the frame of the church was up, inclosed and roofed. Having some special funds in hand I assisted them some and left them happy. Since that time I have visited that community again, and preached in their church, of which they are justly proud. They have purchased an organ, a beautiful communion set, and in other ways added to the attractiveness of their new church. As a further indication of what is being accomplished, our first church in Monrovia is remodeling the building at a cost of more than \$12,000. On the Sunday that Bishops Burt and Hartzell were present this church raised \$2,000, and their repair fund now amounts to upward of \$10,000 in actual cash.

Mount Scott Church, Cape Palmas, a building named in

memory of Bishop Levi Scott's visit to the Conference in 1856, has been remodeled at a cost of \$7,000, and the Annual Conference was held in this magnificent structure last February.

The Clay Ashland Church, to which Bishop Haven referred in his communication, has just collected and expended on the improvement of the building upward of \$1,000. A number of smaller societies are at work either repairing or enlarging their houses of worship, and, as a rule, have all or part of the money in hand to do so. In order to understand fully the amount collected throughout the Conference I asked the brethren at the session visited by Bishop Burt to report what was raised in the different charges for self-help. That year it was \$10,781. At the recent session held the figures given for the year were \$23,241, and for the quadrennium, \$35,270.38.

I believe it but fair to say, also, that the civilized portion of the community is becoming more and more interested in the salvation of the heathen. When I saw an opportunity to take over a building, which had been erected for mission purposes, as a memorial to a young colored woman who had formerly labored as a missionary in Liberia, and needed \$313 to do so, I called on the Sunday School Board of the First Church, Monrovia; they replied: "All right, Bishop, we will give it to you." And they did it. We have in this mission two hundred and seventy-five members, most of whom only a few months ago were in heathenism; we have also a day school, with an enrollment of one hundred and fifty, and a Sunday school equally as large.

I feel it but just to say in this connection that some credit is due the Liberian government for the way it treats our missions with regard to duties on supplies shipped into the republic. All material for building purposes, all food, supplies, and material for clothing the children gathered into the missions, and all medicines to be used for them, are admitted free of duty. You will better understand the advantage this gives when I tell you that when Bishop Hartzell was in America last he bought a number of church bells, costing him less than \$100. These he ordered sent to the mission in Angola, a Portuguese colony of West Africa. The authorities there charged \$750 duty, and he, rather than pay this, concluded to send them to me at Monrovia, which was done. The Liberian authorities, after being assured

that I intended to use them for mission purposes, admitted them without one cent cost.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED

When I announced at the first session of the Conference I held in Africa that it was my purpose to push the causes of temperance, evangelism, and self-support the announcement created no enthusiasm, but recent developments have convinced me that the Conference is now in full accord with me in these lines of work.

In order to promote the cause of temperance I secured the coöperation of a number of the best and most intelligent women of the republic, together with some of the missionaries. Several largely attended and enthusiastic public meetings were held and the attention of hundreds of people was called to the evils and destructiveness of strong drink. You will understand why progress along this line must of necessity be slow when you are reminded of the vast quantities of rum and gin that are imported by European firms for the purpose of trade among the native people. And yet I feel perfectly safe in saying that the native Church of Liberia is a temperance Church, for no one is received who does not pledge himself to abstain from strong drink, and if he be a polygamist, to give up all but one wife.

Along the lines of evangelism and the conversion of the heathen the cause has been pushed as strenuously as we found it possible to do without the assistance of someone specially adapted to such work. At times the success attained in some of the missions has been marked and most satisfactory. At one of our stations called Grand Cess one year the number of conversions reported at the Conference session was so large that it was thought best not to include the figures in the statistics until proper investigation could be made. In due time this was done and the result found to be entirely satisfactory. And I am glad to say that at that point alone there have been during the quadrennium fully five hundred conversions, and I have had the pleasure of preaching there more than once when it was found impossible to hold the services in the church because of the immense crowd in attendance. It is a glorious scene to witness some of the revival meetings among the native people. It seems

to me that nothing is more encouraging to a missionary in a heathen land than to witness the conversion of those for whose salvation he prays and labors and waits. It delights his heart to see living evidence before his very eyes that the old gospel still has power to save.

And just here I feel that I cannot do better than tell of the influence of two little hymn books in the native dialect which we have published this quadrennium. To hear the people sing the hymns in their own language is enough to inspire any man with the thought that the day of salvation for Africa is at hand. How they seem to sweep the people into the kingdom! I felt, as did some of the workers, that if we could have the people sing the gospel in their churches, in their homes, and in the streets of the towns, a larger number could be reached thus than in any other way. In this way we felt that they would all become helpers in preaching the Word. It was a difficult undertaking, because the heathenism of our part of Africa is totally unlettered. We employed translators, but having no dictionary had to spell the words by sound as best we could. The first effort on this line was made at the Garroway Mission, and as the result a convenient little booklet of translated hymns was published. Then came another at Krootown, adjoining Monrovia, and now the missionaries at Wissika are at work on a third. How the people enjoy singing these hymns! and it does anyone, interested in missions, good to listen to them. They sing on the great steamers of the coast. They sing as they carry you in the hammock through the dark and dismal swamps. They sing as they pull the surf boats from one trading post to another, and I have heard them sing in the services of their churches until it seemed that even the roofs responded to their heartfelt enthusiasm and joy. We also had published on cardboard the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments. These we hang in the native cabins and our workers teach the people as to their use and meaning. However, it is only necessary to say further that God blessed us with 450 conversions for the first year, 510 the second, 653 the third, and 581 the fourth, making a total of 2,191 persons born into the kingdom for the quadrennium. The statistics for the first year of the quadrennium showed our membership to be 553 probationers, 2,748 full

members, a total of 3,301. The figures reported at the Annual Conference held recently give 1,103 probationers, 3,194 full members, the total membership being 4,297, a gain for the quadrennium of 996. The gain in church property for the quadrennium is \$44,318.

We are at work among the native people at forty-two different points, many of which could be made strong and influential missions during the next quadrennium if I could only have the money and a few more good workers to help make them so.

As much as I thank God for what has been accomplished, I appreciate more the doors that stand wide open before a hesitating Church—the ease with which we may now reach those who were formerly so difficult of approach. O, that our King who owns the silver and the gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, would send us the men and the money to carry forward the work that we may save dying men and thus glorify God. My only desire is to be able to do my part in saving the heathen world, but it is a waste of time and a useless sacrifice of life and health to ask men and women to go to the front to do the Master's work and yet leave them without the resources necessary for the prosecution of the same. The appropriation is far too small for advance movements, or even the proper support of what we have. In this connection I am reminded of an incident which is said to have occurred on one of the principal rivers of Liberia. Several European traders were being conveyed up the river in a surf boat, which was pulled by some native boys. In an altercation between one of the traders and one of the boys the trader received a severe blow on the head. They determined at once to cast the native overboard. On being asked if he could swim, he said he could. "Well, then," said one of the traders, "we will tie your hands and see if you can." And this they did. The boy was thrown overboard and when it looked as though he would surely drown someone plunged in and rescued him. The great Methodist Episcopal Church elected me for the work I now have, and sent me into the wilds of Africa. I know full well what is expected of me and have been trying with all my might to meet the expectation. But to put even a Bishop in Africa without adequate money and equipment is to tie his hands and cast him overboard. I have twenty-five native schools and

churches unhoused and without equipment. I need at least fifteen workers from the home field and have not the money to provide even one third of them.

If I could have five hundred \$15 scholarships, twenty-five native workers provided for at \$40 each, \$1,000 a year to carry out and support an evangelist, and even \$2,000 a year to equip some of my native stations, we should very soon be able to double the present membership. O, Church of God, untie my hands, untie my hands!

My only plea is for the Church to give me a fair chance to show what can be done. I beg of you to forget the color of my skin, forget the past history of my people, forget that Africa has not hitherto proven as productive a mission field as some others, and hear once more the voice of the Master as he cries, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

